**Report on Monthly Research Meeting,**

**Africa RISING Office, Tamale, 22nd April, 2014**

**Agenda**

*Trials for 2014 research year*

* *Baby trials*
* *Scaling up*
* *Vegetable studies*
* *Integrated crop-livestock*
* *Seeds and fertilizers*
* *Others*
* *Partnerships*
* *Land acquisition*
* *Land preparation*
* *AEA Training*
* *Exchange Visit*

**Introduction**

Africa RISING Chief Scientist and Country representative of IITA, Ghana, commenced the meeting by welcoming all present. He introduced Mr. Dominic Sobreh as the new research associate in charge of vegetables and he stated that Dominic will be based in Navrongo in the Upper East region. There was self introduction of all present after which Dr Larbi enumerated the agenda for the meeting as stated above.

**Trials for 2014**

Dr Larbi informed the meeting that all 2013 trials will be repeated this year in addition to other new trials to be designed. Some of these new trials will include: intercropping involving maize and cowpea, soybean, groundnut and/or vegetables. He further stated that livestock components of the programme will be implemented this year.

**Baby Trials**

There were deliberations on the mode of baby trials for the year. Dr. Larbi told the meeting that the number of baby trials implemented last year will be repeated this year in all project communities. However, the sizes of the baby trial plots will be increased from 10 X 10m to 15 X 15m since farmers always complained of the size of the trials. He advised that all baby trial packages (seeds and fertilizers) should be delivered to the farmers by mid May before the commencement of the season.

**Scaling up**

To answer the question on ‘how to translate the success at the research plot level to a larger scale (Community level)’, some of the research activities need to be up-scaled to achieve the right impact on farmers. Dr. Larbi stated that about 200 farmers in each intervention regions would cultivate about one acre each this year using combinations of proven technologies. At this level, farmers can also realize some meaningful outputs from their work. It was advised that hard working farmers should be selected for the up-scaling studies.

**Vegetable Studies**

As part of the Africa RISING programme, vegetables are major component but little is done by partners working on vegetables. For this reason, there would be extensive work on vegetables from 2014 and beyond. Vegetables like okra, pepper, rosselle, garden eggs, and tomatoes will be demonstrated in selected communities in all regions. Mr. Dominique Sobreh and Miss Comfort Yelipoie were asked to work on the protocols of all vegetable demonstrations. Dr. Larbi informed the meeting that AVRDC has agreed to construct a vegetable hub in Ghana which will be built in the Upper East region. He said about two hectare land will be rented and fenced for the hub, out of which half will be used for research to demonstrate major irrigation schemes while the other half would be used for intensive vegetable production by the women group in the community. The Upper East team was tasked to acquire land in a suitable location for this purpose.

**Integrated Crop-Livestock farming system**

Dr. Larbi lamented that little work is done as part of the project to integrate crop and livestock production in the project area. He blamed this on the fact that many project partners are working in isolation instead of collaborating with each other. For this reason, work-packages for 2014 have been integrated to address this issue.

**Seeds and Fertilizers**

Mr Daniel Brain Akakpo briefed the meeting on the kind and quantities of seeds purchased for research activities in 2014. He also reported on the state of seed packaging for all mother and baby trials. In his presentation, he mentioned that all mother trials for cereals and legumes have been completed. At this point, Dr. Larbi interjected and advised that packaging of baby trials should be done at the regional levels to build the capacity of the regional teams. He asked the northern regional team to take the other regional teams through the procedures of packaging seed for trials. He told the teams to engage extra hand to carry out this exercise if need be.

Mr. Akakpo concluded his presentation by stating the kinds and quantities of fertilizers needed for the research activities for 2014. There were suggestions from the meeting about the complaints from the farmers on the quality of N:P:K 15:15:15 used in 2013. They said the fertilizer were not effective for maize cultivation so the N:P:K 15:15:15 should be replaced with N:P:K 23:10:5 called Actyva blended by Yara Fertilizer Company and sulphate of ammonia should also be replaced with sulphan. This suggestion was accepted by all. Dr Larbi informed that Wumpini Agro Company would be asked to deliver fertilizers to the region and asked Mr Akakpo to work on the quantities based on the decision.

**Others**

*Partnership*

Dr, Larbi encourage all regional teams to work effectively by collaborating with all project partners and stakeholders. He asked that during our routine works efforts should be made to identify Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Women Interest Groups (WIGs) Rural banks or financial organizations, agro input dealers and marketers in all districts for partnership. He stated that our association with Savanna Agriculture Research Institute (SARI) and Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) should be strengthened to facilitate success of the project.

*Land Acquisition*

Dr. Larbi informed the house that the project has been advised to rent larger parcel of land where many trials could be established in the same location. This will showcase many technologies to farmer at a single location for effective adoption. He tasked the regional teams to acquire larger spaces by the roadside for the demonstration especially in the Upper West region where many of the fields are located far away from the communities. The response from the Upper West teams was that the reason for locating the trials at such place was to prevent stray animal from destruction of the fields. On this, Dr Larbi advised that the fields could be fenced by the farmers with local materials or hire some community members to watch over the fields.

*Land preparation*

On the issues of lack of tractor services in the intervention communities, it was advised to get tractor operators to the communities to plough all mother trial sites and also plough for farmers in the communities. It was also agreed that all field should be ploughed and harrowed in the regions while ridging should be done in the Upper East region which is the usual practise in the area.

*Training of Agriculture Extension Agents (AEAs)*

It was proposed to train all MOFA AEAs on the project from the regions in Tamale on the protocols for the trials and guides to crop production. It was however, suggested to decentralised this activity to the regions to minimize cost. At this point it was also suggested to procure simple mobile phones for community facilitators to ease communication since some of them have no means of communication. Dr. Larbi suggested that since AEAs are paid monthly all community facilitators (male and female) should be given something at the end of each month.

*Exchange Visit*

Dr. Larbi by way of conclusion advised that all trials should be laid neatly according to the protocols. He informed that team of scientist from Mali and Ibadan (Headquarters) will visit Ghana this year for field visit. This is to reciprocate the visit made by a team of scientists from Ghana to Mali in 2013. He thanked all for attending the meeting.

**Attendance**

Asamoah Larbi, *Chief Scientist for Africa RISING-West Africa*

Daniel Brain Akakpo, *Research Associate- NR*

Shaibu Mellon – Bedi, Research Supervisor- NR

Comfort Yelipoie, *Research supervisor - NR*

Fuseini Dokurugu*, Research technician-NR*

Hamid Seidu, *Research supervisor - UWR*

Fuseini Abdulai, *Research supervisor – UWR*

Ishmael Mahama, Research technician - UWR

Dominic Sobreh, Research Associate, UER

Naab Desire, Research technician -UER

**Compiled by:**

**Akakpo Daniel Brain**

*(Research Associate-AR)*